US Middle East Policy:
The Growing Propensity for Genocide

Professor John J. Mearsheimer address to
The Arab Center Washington DC 10/04/2026

Introduction:

I'm very honored uh uh to uh introduce uh our keynote uh speaker uh this morning, Professor John J. Merchheimer, who does not need an introduction uh for an audience like this, pretty savvy in

terms of foreign policy and particularly focusing on on the Middle East. uh but uh nonetheless uh for the sake of uh everybody uh in the audience I would like to go ahead and proceed with at

least highlighting uh professor Mshheimer's uh contribution.
Professor Mshheimer is the Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at the University

of Chicago. And if you excuse my bias, it was my home away from home in the mid70s. spent a few years there and uh professor Mshheimer has uh taught uh there since 1982.

He graduated from uh West Point in 1970 and completed his PhD in political science uh from Cornell University in 1981. He has written extensively about security issues and international

politics. among his seven books, by the way, The Tragedy uh of Great Power Politics, which uh was published in 2001 and updated uh 2014.
It won the Joseph Lip Gold book prize

and has been translated into 11 languages.
The next uh the classic that many of you are familiar with uh Israel the uh Israel lobby and US foreign policy uh

that he co-wrote with Steven Walt back in 2007
and it made the New York Times uh bestseller list and has been translated by the way into 26 languages in case

people at APAC who or who support APAC didn't understand English. So, it's available in 26 different languages. The Great Delusion: Liberal Ideals and International Realities, published in

2018, won the 2019 best book of the year award from the Valdi Discussion Conference in Moscow and has been translated also into 11 languages. His latest work is how states think the

rationality of foreign policy very relevant to this week's events. Uh it it is written with or co-authored with Sebastian Rosato. It came out in 2023 and has also been translated into 11

languages.
He has also written numerous articles and op-eds that have appeared in international security, the economist, the London Review of Books, Foreign

Affairs, the Financial Times, the New York Times, etc. Professor Mshimer has received honorary doctorates from universities across the world including China, Greece, and Romania. In 20 in uh

2003 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2020 he won the James Madison award which is given once every three years by ABSA the American Political Science Association

to an American political scientist who has made a distinguished scholarly contribution to political science. We are extremely honored this morning to have professor Mshheimer with us. Uh and

before I turn to him to make his remarks, I would would like to uh note for you that he has graciously agreed to take few questions uh at the end of uh his remarks. And uh if uh if you note

there are cards in front of you at the center of your table. For those who have questions uh please identify yourself uh write your question down legibly and we will be uh more than delighted to uh

present your question to our uh key uh keynote uh speaker. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Professor Mshimer.

Prof. John J. Mearsheimer

Thank you, Khalil, for the kind introduction and uh thank you to the Arab Center for inviting me to be here today. It's a great honor. Uh my only regret is that I only have a total of 45 minutes. I wish I had two hours and 45

minutes because I'd like to talk for at

least an hour and uh take questions for at least an hour and 45 minutes.
uh given the events of the day uh or of the past few days uh or maybe the past

40 days, I want to focus mainly on the Iran war. Uh but I'd like to put my comments into a larger context.
And I'd like to start by saying that when I was young and we thought about

the Middle East, uh it was always emphasized it was that it is one of the three areas of the world that is of great strategic importance to the United States in large part because that's

where the oil is located. The other two areas of course were Europe and East Asia. And those areas were important because other great powers were located there. The Middle East was important

because of oil. And what we wanted to make sure didn't happen was that no one state, whether uh indigenous to the Middle East or from outside, controlled all of the oil. Uh what's happened over

time is the oil issue has faded into the background because there's really no threat of any country dominating all of the oil in the Middle East. So we don't have to worry, we the United States,

much about the Middle East because of oil. And the reason we care greatly about the Middle East today, we care enormously about the Middle East is because of our connection to Israel. And

the fact is that Israel has a very special relationship with the United States that is unparalleled in history. It's very important to understand this. The United States supports Israel

unconditionally.
Uh
the United States and Israel obviously have different national interests at particular points in time because no

countries, no two countries have the same national interest all the time. But in cases where Israel's national interest and America's national interest diverge, the United States pursues what

is in Israel's national interest. And the reason, of course, is because of the power of the Israel lobby, which is just enormous. Uh I think most people realize that today. uh when Steve Walt and I

wrote the original article in the London Review of Books in 2006 and then the book itself in 2007, I think most people thought that we were exaggerating. In fact, we were talking about the tip of

the iceberg. Uh and I think now people understand that. But it's just very important to understand that our foreign policy in the Middle East is largely driven by Israel. And of course the key

factor in making that happen is the lobby. So let's just talk a bit now about what Israel's goals are. Sort of what Israel's grand strategy is in the region. I think it has three parts to

it. One, they want to expand the borders. They want to create a greater Israel. This of course now includes uh the occupied territories uh the West Bank and Gaza. Uh but Israel's ambitions

go beyond that. They want to take southern Lebanon up to the Latani River. They want to take parts of southern Syria. Uh I think they'd like to take the East Pank uh if they could and

expand into the Sinai. They have a voracious appetite for expansion. Uh that's the first goal to create a greater Israel. Uh the second goal is to ethnically cleanse the territory that

they take. And here we're talking at this point in time mainly by go mainly about Gaza and the West Bank. As you all know, there roughly as many Israeli Jews as there are Palestinians inside uh

greater Israel today. Uh and that's a huge problem for the Israelis. The Israelis were willing to accept about 20% Palestinians. Uh but when you're in a situation where it's about 50/50, uh

that's unacceptable. So the Israelis are deeply committed to ethnically cleansing. Uh and then the third goal has to do with their neighbors. Uh what they want to do is make sure all their

neighbors are as weak as possible. Uh and this works in basically two ways. One is to have neighbors that are subservient to the United States. this is Egypt and Jordan uh and I would argue

even Lebanon to some extent. Uh they want countries uh on their borders uh that the United States has huge coercive

leverage over. Uh and if that doesn't work with the bigger countries like the

Syrias, the Iran, the Turkeys, then they want to wreck those countries. Uh, and in fact, what the Israelis are very interested in doing in Iran is wrecking Iran the way Syria was wrecked. They'd

like to break it up into different pieces. Or if they can't do that, they'd like to get regime change and get a regime in place in Iran that is subservient to the United States. Uh,

but those are the three principal goals. And it's very important to understand that what was happening in Gaza or what is happening in Gaza with the genocide is the pursuit of goals number one and

goals number two. Creating a greater Israel that is ethnically pure and that's what has led them to pursue ethnic cleansing which has morphed into a genocide. But the case of Gaza is the

first two goals at play. The case of Iran is the third goal at play. Again, the aim there is to break apart uh Iran or cause regime change. Uh and if you look at Lebanon, uh Lebanon is really a

case of the first two goals. They want to take the territory south of the Latani River, make it part of greater Israel, and they want to ethnically cleanse that area. You can see them hard

at work in pursuit of that goal. So that's the basic picture. Let me say a few words about Gaza before I go to Iran. Um what happened in Gaza uh after October 7th is that the Israelis sought

an opportunity to cleanse Gaza. Uh the two big cleansings that had taken place before October 7th, as almost all of you know, took place in 1948 and 1967. And those two cleansing took took place

in the context of a war. And once you have a war, which is what you get after October 7th, the Israelis have an excellent opportunity to cleanse Gaza. And they think that what they can do is

they can use massive military power, air power mainly, they can punish the Palestinian population in Gaza to the point where it leaves Gaza. They can ethnically cleanse Gaza. And their hope

is that the Egyptians and the Jordanians

will accept the Palestinians because the Israelis will inflict so much punishment on them that how could the Egyptians and how could the Jordanians not accept

them? That's the basic logic that's at play here. But of course, the Palestinians don't leave. They absorb the punishment. And what happens is that the bombing, the punishment campaign

morphs into a genocide campaign. And if you can't drive out the Palestinians, then you kill them all. You murder them all. And you do that through bombing. And you do that through starvation. And

this, of course, is what happened. And this is why I think it is perfectly appropriate to describe uh what happened in Gaza as a genocide.
want to make one other point about that

genocide which has implications for what I'm going to say about Iran and moving forward. What is truly remarkable to me um as someone who is a realist who has operated in a very liberal academic and

intellectual environment in the United States for all of my life is the extent to which liberals,
dedicated liberals who professed to believe in human rights said virtually

nothing
when this genocide was taking place. And it's not only because the Israelis were committing a genocide that I'm shocked and people didn't say anything in a

fundamental way. What shocked me even more was that the United States is complicit in the genocide. There's just no question about this. If we had Nuremberg trials,

we're not going to have them. But if we had Nurembergl like trials,
Joe Biden and his principal lieutenants and Donald Trump and his principal lieutenants would be hanged. There's no

question in my mind about this. We're talking about a genocide. We know what happened to all those people who executed a genocide between 1941 and 1945 in Europe. They were hanged.

Well, I think the same thing would happen to Biden and his lieutenants and Trump and his lieutenants. It's really quite remarkable
uh that hardly a word was said in the

liberal establishment in the United States against what Israel was doing and the United States was helping them to do committing genocide, the greatest of all crimes. This is truly remarkable in my

opinion. And I used to say to myself, there's something wrong here. When a realist like me is one of the few people inside mainstream academia who is standing up and saying this is terribly

wrong and something should be done to stop it.
Moving on to Iran.
Let's talk about why we went into the war to start with. Uh it's quite clear

that basically the Israelis bamboozled President Trump into starting this war. Uh I could tell from the beginning that the deep state was not in favor of this war. I know one or two people on the

inside and uh you could tell from what people were saying about General Ka's views in in the mainstream media that uh the deep state was not enthusiastic about this war. And of course, we all

knew just having watched Prime Minister Netanyahu over the past 40 years that he is deeply committed uh to uh uh to attacking Iran with the United States and either creating regime change and

producing a regime that dances to our tune or wrecking the country. So, we knew for sure that uh Netanyahu was pushing very hard. And the New York Times has now written two big pieces on

how the decision was made. And in my opinion, it's unequivocally clear from those two articles that the deep state was not in favor of this war. There were all sorts of individuals who were

telling President Trump, these are government officials at the highest level who were telling President Trump, "This is not a good idea. It's probably not going to work." Uh Kaine basically

said, "We don't have a viable military strategy and the National Intelligence Council produced a report that said it wasn't going to work." Uh and so forth and so on. But what happened is that

Mossad uh convinced both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Trump that we could win a quick and decisive victory.

You all know the story. Uh what we do is we go in, we launch a shock and awe

campaign and we especially pay attention to decapitating the regime. And once we do that, the whole house of cards will tumble. And the reason that the whole house of cards will tumble is that the

regime is built on sand. The foundation is very weak and all you have to do is topple the leaders and people will be able to rise up, overthrow the government and we will get in place a

new government that will basically surrender to us.
uh and um it's quite clear that uh Netanyahu himself and the head of BSAD David Bara played a key role the central

role in convincing President Trump that this would work that this strategy this shock and awe strategy built around decapitation would produce a quick and decisive victory and we all know from

the international relations literature when you don't produce a quick and decisive victory. Uh that what happens is the war morphs into a war of attrition. Uh and this of course is

exactly what has happened uh in uh the case of Iran. We're now in a war of attrition.
And the fact is we can't win a war of attrition. Uh it's just not possible. Uh

let me just give you six points that illustrate that. Think about this very powerful navy that we have that President Trump talks about using to open the Straits of Hormuz. We can't put

that navy anywhere near Iran. Certainly anywhere near the straight of Hormuz for fear that it'll get sunk to the bottom of the Jolly Rodger by either Iranian cruise missiles or Iranian drones. you

understand that the Navy is parked far away from Iran and not therefore very useful uh bases. We had 13 bases in the region, 13 major bases in the region. The New York Times has reported that of

those 13 bases, all of them are either badly damaged or destroyed.
uh in terms of ground forces, a ground invasion, you know, people in the media talk about 40 or 50,000 troops being

located uh in the Middle East and this

implies that these are 40 or 50,000 combat troops. That's simply not true. you need, you know, you need infantry divisions or or or marine brigades or

whatever uh to uh uh wage combat uh ground combat against Iran. And President Trump has only recently moved 7,000 combat troops into the region. 7,000 combat troops. You could do hardly

anything with 7,000 combat troops. And if I walked you all the through all the scenarios where you might think about using those 7,000 combat troops, you would see that this is, you know, uh not

possible to win any kind of it's not possible to win any kind of military victory with those small ground forces. terms of aircraft. Do you know that in this rescue operation, we mo lost more

planes in one day than we've lost at any time since the Vietnam War. Just think about that. We lost more planes in a rescue operation that's supposed to be a great victory

than we lost on any single day since the Vietnam War. And that was a long time ago. And we fought a long list of wars since then. Uh then missiles and high-end munitions. You understand?

We're running out of missiles and high-end munitions. This is catastrophic for trying to contain China. We were supposed to pivot to Asia. We're pivoting away from Asia. We're bringing

THAAD missiles. We're bringing Patriot missiles. We're bringing this Marine Expeditionary Unit out of East Asia to deal with the problems we face in the Middle East. This is not the way you

want to contain China. This is pivoting away from East Asia, as I said. And then finally, we have no ability to defend our allies in the GCC,
right? They're being pounded by the

Iranians.
That's just the American side. The more interesting side is the Iranian side. They hold almost all the cards. They are in a really powerful position.

By cutting off traffic through the straight of Hormuz, they're in a position to tank the global economy. Just think about that.
The leverage that they have is enormous.

The consequences of what's happened so far for the international economy are going to be devastating.
The fertilizers, people don't talk much about the fertilizers. They talk about

the oil and gas. Onethird of the world's fertilizers come through the straight of Hormuz. This is planting season in lots of countries. The consequences of all this down the road. Many, many people

are going to starve to death as a result of this crazy war. But the Iranians, right, they have huge leverage over the world economy and we of course understand that. Furthermore, they have

huge leverage over the GCC states, those six countries. Why? Because they can destroy them as functioning societies. They could destroy their destroy their energy infrastructure, but more

importantly, they could destroy their desaliniza their desalination plants. These are big fat targets, few in number. The Iranians have lots of very accurate missiles and god knows how many

drones.
They can wreck those countries. This is a serious threat that gives them huge leverage.
So the basic problem that President

Trump faces, this is the basic problem he faces, is he can't go up the escalation ladder because the Iranians can beat him on every rung because they have

control of the straight of Hormuz and they have the ability to wreck the GCC countries and by the way do enormous damage to Israel as well. There's a good reason that the Israelis are going to

enormous lengths not to let us know what's happening inside their society in terms of hits from missiles, both ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, right? So you just want to understand

that.
So we can't go up the escalation ladder and moreover
there's no exit option here except admitting defeat.

That's the only way Trump can get out of this is to basically admit defeat. You see what I'm saying here? He can't go up

the escalation ladder. And there's no attractive exit option.

And the Iranians are certainly not going to give him an attractive exit option. If you're playing their hand, if you're playing their hand, you want to be incredibly hard-nosed and ruthless with

the United States and the Israelis. They are mortal enemies. you understand that from the Iranian point of view, we are an existential threat to them. So, they have a deep-seated interest in driving a

hard bargain, to put it mildly, and they have a lot of leverage. This is the predicament that Trump is in. So, this brings us to Monday. Monday morning, he issues this remarkable truth post,

truth social post, where he says that if the Iranians don't cave, in other words, if the Iranians don't throw up their hands and surrender by nighttime, he's going to destroy

Iran as a civilization. He's going to destroy it and make it impossible for Iran to come back from the dead. This is a truly stunning statement. This is another example of genocidal

language. Is did anybody ever think that an American president would say something like that? I certainly didn't. This is the kind of language you language that you would expect from

someone like Adolf Hitler, right? that you're going to exterminate this country called Iran, erase it from the planet, and make it so it can never come back. Sounds like a Carthaginian solution,

doesn't it?
What's going on here? You want to ask yourself, what's going on here is Trump is desperate. He's desperate because he understands the basic logic that I just

laid out to you. We are playing a losing hand. And the consequences of continuing to play that hand are that the global economy will go off a cliff. It will do much more than destroy his presidency.

The consequences would be enormous. He knows this. I'm sure he has people who are telling him that. He's desperate. So what does he say Monday morning? I'm going to turn to extermination. I'm

going to turn to genocide.

But then you want to think about what happens later the day that day, Monday evening, he backs off. And what does he do? He basically says, "I concede

defeat." It's very important to understand that. He basically says, "I concede defeat." Now, why am I saying this?
First of all, there are two plans on the

table. One is the 15-point plan. Those are our demands. That's plan number one, the 15-point plan. And then there's the Iranian plan. That's the 10-point plan. And if you read them, it's like the

difference between night and day. If you read the 15-point plan, it has all this the the typical US and Israeli demands of Iran. And if you read the Tenpoint plan, the Iranian plan, it has all of

their maximalist demands in it. What President Trump says in his truth social post where he basically says I surrender is he says that I accept the 10point plan. He says that he says it's a solid

basis or a sound basis or a good basis for moving forward.
Wow, that's really shocking, right? So, let's just look a little more carefully at what's going on here. We

went into the war, we meaning the United States and the Israelis, the TAG, I like to call them the tag team. The tag team went into the war with four main goals. Number one was uh no more nuclear

enrichment for Iran. Uh, number two, they have to get rid of all their missiles, their long range missiles for sure, anything that threatens Israel. Number three, they have to stop

supporting the Houthis, Hamas, and Hezbollah. And number four, regime change. It's very clear that regime change is the goal. Trump denies that. Others deny it from time to time, others

in the administration, but all you have to do is look at the New York Times piece. Uh, and uh, it's manifestly clear that we were bent on regime change. That's what David Barna uh, and Benjamin

Na Netanyahu were talking about. And President Trump, there's no question about that. Uh, and you want to remember President Trump talked about unconditional surrender. Uh, this is

regime change. So regime change was one of the four principal goals. We have failed at every one of those goals. We're not getting rid of Iranian missiles. We're not getting rid of their

nuclear enrichment capability. In fact, their great fear is that they're going to get nuclear weapons, right? Uh and in terms of supporting Hezbollah, Houthis, the Houthis, and Hamas, there's been no

change on that dimension. The Iranians and Hezbollah are actually working together uh dealing with uh the situation in southern Lebanon and northern Israel. Uh and with regard to

the Houthis, one of our great fears is that the Houthis in cahoots with the Iranians will shut down uh the straight at the end of the Red Sea and then there'll be no traffic out of the Red

Sea as well as that out of the Persian Gulf. This would be really disastrous, right? Uh and we haven't gotten regime change. None of the four goals have been achieved.

And furthermore, the Houthies are now in charge of the straight of Hormuz. On February 27th, they were not in charge of the straight of Hormuz. They were not threatening to throttle the world

economy. They now control the straight of Hormuz. And they would be out of their minds to give up that control. So I think for as far as the eye can see, Iran is going to be in control of the

strait. This is disastrous for the United States. Uh it's just disastrous. Furthermore, if you look at those Houthy demands, they want the sanctions lifted,

right? They want US bases out of the region. Now, who knows what the final agreement is going to look like, but if they get any of those demands, this is a shocking defeat for the United States. I

just want to understand that because as I said to you, the only exit option here, the only exit option was to accept defeat. Exactly what the defeat looks like. Not easy to say at this point, but

it is a clear defeat. Now, I want to switch gears and talk about the Israelis.

I think for the Israelis,
this whole situation, it borders on

cataclysmic.
Uh, first of all, they believe, the
Israeli people believe, and certainly
Prime Minister Netanyahu believes that
Iran is an existential threat that is

committed to wiping them from the face
of the earth. I don't believe that, but
that doesn't matter because what I
believe is largely irrelevant. It's what
they believe. They believe that. Uh, as

you all know, for Prime Minister
Netanyahu, Iran is his Moby Dick, right?
and he has lost this war. Uh
Iran is stronger than ever. Furthermore,
Iran is still in a position where it can

support Hamas, Hezbollah,
and
the Houthies.
Uh furthermore, this has done enormous
damage to USIsraeli relations. I mean,

that New York Times story the other day
is
guaranteed to make it clear to huge
numbers of Americans that the Israelis
led us by the nose into this war. And

there were all sorts of people in the
national security establishment uh who
were flashing orange lights if not a red
light. But why did we go? Because the
Israelis convinced

President Trump that it was a good idea,
that they had a workable strategy. This
is disastrous for Israel. Uh and
furthermore, if you look at what's
happening to public opinion in the

United States regarding the state of
Israel, uh and regarding our
relationship with Israel and regarding
the lobby, what's happening for me as
someone who wrote the Israel lobby

article and book in 2006 2007, I find it
hard to believe that this has all
happened. I I never thought that as long
as I remained on the planet, I would see
a situation that looked like the one

we're in today in terms of uh US-Israeli
relations and the lobby situation here
in the United States. So, I think Israel
is in truly deep trouble. Uh truly deep
trouble. what happened on February 28th.

From our point of view and from the

world's point of view, because of the economic consequences of all this, but also from Israel's point of view, this was a colossal blunder. You just cannot

underestimate what a colossal blunder it was for the United States and Israel to go to war on February 28th. It has backfired in a profound way.
Brings me to my final point. Uh this all

raises the serious possibility that somewhere down the road uh the Israelis will use nuclear weapons against Iran. Uh I am uh very worried about that. Uh as I said to you before, the Israelis

worry greatly about Iran. They think it's an existential threat and their greatest fear is that Iran will acquire nuclear weapons.
And I think if the Israelis even suspect

that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons that uh they will use nuclear weapons to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear deterrent because it's now clear that Israel cannot prevent Iran from

acquiring nuclear weapons using its own conventional forces. It doesn't work. the only option they have is nuclear weapons. And I believe the Israelis would use nuclear weapons uh in that

situation. Now, you might say to yourself, well, the United States would stop that from happening. The United States will not stop that from happening. Uh the Israelis, the United

States is complicit in the genocide in Gaza. President Trump's first reaction on Monday when he was in desperate straits was to threaten genocide himself against Iran. And furthermore, just

given the power of the lobby in the United States, it's extremely unlikely that we will stop Israel from using nuclear weapons against Iran. So my final two points to you are this. Number

one, this all shows that Israel is an albatross around America's neck, an argument I've long made. And number two, the years ahead in the Middle East are going to be extremely dangerous because

of the situation that I just described. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Thank you uh professor Mshheimer and uh particularly uh for willing to entertain a couple of questions uh after this uh

great uh presentation. Uh let me begin while we're waiting for some more questions to come this way. Ask you about the impact of this war on the GCC countries uh the so-called you know the

Arab allies of the United States. How long do you believe these countries are going to take to uh or need to recover from the damage uh done over the past uh month?

Well, with regard to how much damage is done, it is possible that the ceasefire will break down and we will go back to fighting and even more damage will be done to the GCC countries. So the

question here uh the answer to the question here depends on how long this war goes on and uh how much damage is done. Uh most people say I mean I'm not an expert on this and furthermore it's

hard to tell exactly how much damage has been done uh because there's so much propaganda taking place but most people seem to think that it will take a good five years at least to undo all the

damage that's been done uh and to return to a situation that approximates the status quo ante. So I think it's going to take a number of years and I think in the meantime that's going to have

serious negative consequences on the global economy. Uh and uh
uh I think one of the really interesting questions is what is the diplomatic or uh alliance structure likely to look

like once the war ends? In other words, are the GCC countries going to abandon their close relationship with the United States given what the United States has done to them? Uh my sense at a general

level is that countries all over the world are thinking about how to change their relationship with the United States.
uh if I'm an East Asian ally like South

Korea or Japan and I see that the United States moved all these critical resources out of East Asia to deal with a problem in the Middle East, I begin to wonder whether or not the American

security umbrella which is over my head, the American nuclear umbrella which is over my head is reliable. Uh so I think it'll have huge consequences there. the Europeans. I mean, Trump continues to

beat the Europeans over the head for no purpose. It just seems to me that they're very close to the point where they're finally going to get some spine and or some backbone and stand up to the

Americans and understand that they just can't rely on the United States anymore. The Gulf States are in a similar situation, right? It they didn't decide to start this war in my opinion. uh the

United States brought this war down on them and their countries are being wrecked uh or at least they're being seriously damaged and run the risk of being wrecked. I think that would be

better language. Uh so the question is what are those states going to do once the war ends? I think they're going to go to great lengths to try and distance themselves from the United States as

much as possible. Number two, they're going to go to great lengths to be nice to the Iranians. uh because they don't want to do this again. Um but the big problem that they face is that they have

no alternative alliance partner uh at this point in time. Maybe down the road that will be China and they can turn to China for help, but they're between Iraq and hard place. Uh it's hard for them to

walk away from the United States. But the problem is every state on the planet outside of the United States knows now being close to the United States gets you in trouble. As Henry Kissinger likes

to say, there's only one thing that's or like to as he used to say, there's only one thing worse than being an adversary of the United States and that's being an ally of the United States.

Uh we got actually a few minutes less than uh eight minutes uh to answer about uh what 50 uh questions
that you guys have sent. So I I really uh thank you for your interest and for

all your questions but I apologize for not being able to squeeze all of them. uh but briefly uh you have a question from Dimmitri Kersonen of uh of TAS uh

what are the implications of the Iran

conflict uh with NATO going forward
>> considering the meeting
>> as I said I I think the consequences of
the Iran
war coupled with everything that

happened before that regarding Greenland
and Ukraine
spells doom for the transatlantic
relationship.
President Trump has almost three more

years left in office. Uh, and he's like
a bull in a china shop. Nobody, I
assume, has any doubts about that at
this point in time. And you also
understand that President Trump now got

to figure out who to blame for this
fiasco because President Trump never
accepts responsibility for anything
foolish that he does. It always has to
be somebody else's fault. And I bet he's

going to blame Prime Minister Netanyahu.
I bet he's going to blame his uh uh uh
his NATO allies for not rescuing him at
the appropriate moment. He's already
begun to spin this story that we could

have won this war had the Europeans sent
their navies to help open the uh the
straight. I mean, this is a ludicrous
argument, but that's what's going on
here. So, I anticipate that uh US uh uh

US European relations, which are now
poisonous, will get even more poisonous.
And by the way, this will have huge
consequences for the Ukraine war uh
working in Russia's favor, I would add.

Uh why didn't Trump advisers warn him
that the Iran war would jeopardize the
containment of China?
>> Well, I would make a couple points. One
is they effectively did warn him. The

New York Times makes that clear. They
told him that this was not likely to
work. This was not a good idea. The
problem with Trump is he didn't dig down
and ask them why they were doubtful

about the likelihood of success and
studied the problem himself and figure
out why it was unlikely to succeed. What
I find truly remarkable about this is we
have a rich scholarly literature that is

easily accessible to anybody with a
college degree. I would argue anyone

with a high school degree that tells you that using air power alone to produce regime change doesn't work. We have a

whole literature on the subject of regime change, leave out the air power dimension that tells you how hard it is to do regime change and how often it backfires.

The idea that this strategy was going to work, I don't know how anybody could possibly believe it. And remember I told you that David Barna who was the key person in MSAD who convinced Netanyahu

and Trump that we had this winning strategy. Barna's predecessor
I think his name was Yosi Cohen uh he was the previous head of MSAD. He thought this was a cockami idea quite

correctly and uh but Barna turned it around 180 degrees and said that it would work. So there was just a huge amount of evidence that this wouldn't work. As best I can tell, except for

maybe Pete Hegsith, there was nobody who was in the inner circle who was arguing that this is a good idea. All of them had major league doubts. Final point I'd make to you is Trump is such a powerful

personality and he's so difficult to be honest with that I don't think that people went all the way and fully expressed their doubts. They expressed their doubts. But you've seen the

pictures of his cabinet meetings where they go around the table and everybody licks his boots. You've seen this, right? That's what you have to do when you're dealing with this guy. And that's

not what you want in these kind of situations. I mean, I've thought long and hard about this over the years about what a proper decisionmaking process looks like. Sebastian Rosado and I wrote

about this in the book How States Think. And when you're in charge, when you're the president, you know, you're President Kennedy, it's the Cuban Missile Crisis. You want to hear what

everybody has to say and you want to let them express their full opinions because when you go to war, you are rolling the dice. You just want to understand that. And that applies whether you're a

communist country like the Soviet Union thinking about invading Czechoslovakia in 1968 or you're JFK thinking about how to deal with the Cuban missile crisis or if you're Donald Trump thinking about

rolling the dice and going to war against Iran, you better think long and hard about how this is going to play out. Basic Vitzian logic tells you that war is a crapshoot. He should have

understood that and he should have had adviserss who were fully upfront with him about what the likelihood of success was, what the potential costs were and so forth and so on. But it's very hard

to do that with Donald Trump because of his commanding personality.
Uh related to that uh professor Mshheimer uh SA Azodi asks uh with regards to your latest books rationality

of uh states was this war rational at all from
from your perspective.
>> I'll answer that with one word. No.